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Business Recycling What "Provide for Separation" Means

If it sounds too good to be true...it probably is.

Some vendors of collection and processing services are suggesting that the phrase "make provision for the separation" found in Section 1(c) of Public Act 90-220 means that nonresidential waste generators do not need to do any presegregation of recyclable materials prior to their collection. In other words, "just keep putting out your trash and we'll take care of it." They assert that nonresidential solid waste can be aggregated and collected as it has always been and then taken to a solid waste facility where the designated recyclables will be hand and/or mechanically separated from the other waste materials.

Recyclable Materials May Not Be Contaminated

The statutes, as well as common sense, indicate that some presegregation must occur by nonresidential waste generators prior to collection. The presegregation will prevent contamination of the recyclable materials that would make them unfit for recycling. For example, if cafeteria or other wet wastes are collected mixed with white paper or corrugated, the paper materials will be contaminated and unfit for recycling. Similarly, if recyclable glass food containers are mixed with white paper and cardboard and the glass breaks and becomes enmeshed in the paper, the paper will be unfit for recycling.

Some Mixing of Certain Materials Is Allowed

This does not mean that nonresidences must presegregate all of their recyclables. It is acceptable to mix together certain recyclables and nonrecyclables that do not contaminate one another. For instance, paper waste, clean plastic waste and clean wood waste could be aggregated for collection by the generator and then separated at a volume reduction facility without significant contamination of the recyclables. The generator would probably pay a fee for this service rather than receiving revenue for presegregated materials, but space and quantity limitations might make this the best approach for generators of small quantities of recyclables.

The clearest legal statement of the need for some level of presegregation is found in Section 22a-259(10) of the Connecticut General Statutes, which states: "It is the intent of this (chapter) to promote the presegregation of recoverable or recyclable materials before they become mixed and included in the waste stream...."

Several sections of Public Act 90-220 implement the policy of Section 22a-259(10): Section 1(c) states: "On and after January 1, 1991, (1) each person who generates solid waste from residential property shall ... separate from other solid waste the items designated for recycling pursuant to subsection (a) of this section and (2) every other person who generates solid waste shall ... make provision for the separation from other solid waste of the items designated for recycling pursuant to Subsection (a) of this section." If the system for "providing separation" results in the production of contaminated recyclables which have to be sent to a landfill or energy recovery facility, the intent of the law to separate the designated items for recycling is not met.

Enforcement Provisions

Other sections of Public Act 90-220 impose enforcement responsibilities on municipalities, haulers and disposal facilities, all aimed at ensuring that the designated recyclables do not end up at a disposal facility, but are instead recycled. Section 2(c) requires municipalities to pass ordinances or adopt other legal measures to enforce the separation requirements for residential and nonresidential generators and to ensure that collectors assist the municipalities in identifying those who mix recyclables with solid waste.

Other sections require collectors of solid waste (4a) to inform the municipality if any generator mixes recyclable materials with solid waste, and owners or operators of resource recovery and other solid waste facilities to identify loads of incoming waste with significant quantities of recyclables and report them to the hauler and municipality so that action can be taken.

Enforcement penalties are established in Public Act 90-249 to be imposed on those who do not comply with the recycling mandates. The enforcement measures and penalties provided for in Public Acts 90-220 and 90-249 do not distinguish between residential and nonresidential generators of solid waste. Consequently, these sections of the law require sufficient separation to prevent contamination of designated recyclables.

1991 Recycling Poster/Calendar Available

The winners of a statewide recycling poster contest for 4th, 5th and 6th grade students are featured on a 1991 poster/calendar now available from the DEP. To receive your free calendar, please write:

Kim Trella
DEP Recycling Program
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Business Workshops Successful, Another Planned

The business recycling workshops held last October and November in conjunction with the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, the Southwest Area Commerce and Industry Association, and local chambers of commerce were filled beyond capacity. A total of nearly 800 businesses of all sizes and types attended the workshops. To accomodate the overflow businesses, another workshop has been planned for the Hartford area in late February. The workshops are 3 hours in length and are free of charge. If your business would like to attend, please send your name, company, address and phone number to Kim Trella at the address above.

Does Your Town Need Textbooks?

The Town of Brooklyn has a "pick-up load" of math textbooks (grades K-9). Before recycling them, is there anyone who can use them? Call Al Lyons, Brooklyn Recycling Coordinator, at 779-1105.

Urban Recycling Information Available

The following documents are now available from the DEP. Please call the DEP Recycling Program at 566-8722 or 566-8895 if you would like a copy.

City Cycle: A Guide to Recycling in Urban Settings. The manual focuses on designing recycling programs for multi-family residences and businesses, and is appropriate for all municipal recycling coordinators.

Connecticut Urban Recycling Study: Local Condition Reports for Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Stamford, and Waterbury, contains detailed information and data on housing and commercial characteristics, solid waste generation, and projected quantities of recyclables for each of Connecticut's five largest cities.

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